



The true basis of fellowship.



Do not become diversely yoked with unbelievers. For what partnership have righteousness and lawlessness? Or what communion has light with darkness? 15 Now what agreement has Christ with Belial? Or what part a believer with an unbeliever? 16 Now what concurrence has a temple of God with idols? (2 Corinthians 6:14-16).

LAJGAASBSDBWAKTCIAUANT

Every now and then a dangerous trend arises in the body of Christ that would make doctrine—that is, “teaching,” or truth—take a back seat to something that I call “Let’s-all-just-get-along-and-stop-being-so-divisive-because-we-all-know-that-Christ-is-about-unity-and-not-teaching,” which from now on shall be known by its handy acronym: LAJGAASBSDBWAKTCIAUANT.

Let’s face it: truth divides people. For now, this is precisely what it is meant to do. Read 2 Corinthians 6:14-16, above. If truth does not divide, then Paul could not and would not have written these words about light having

no communion with darkness, and righteousness having no communion with lawlessness. Do you see? To Paul, there is no middle ground. We are living in the God-ordained days of “Let There Be Opposites.” This is for the sake of the education of contrast. This is *so much* the day of divinely-appointed contrasts that if truth does not divide, then it’s not truth. Instead, it’s some watered-down version of the truth that *everyone* can agree upon—in which case we must insist upon calling it a lie.

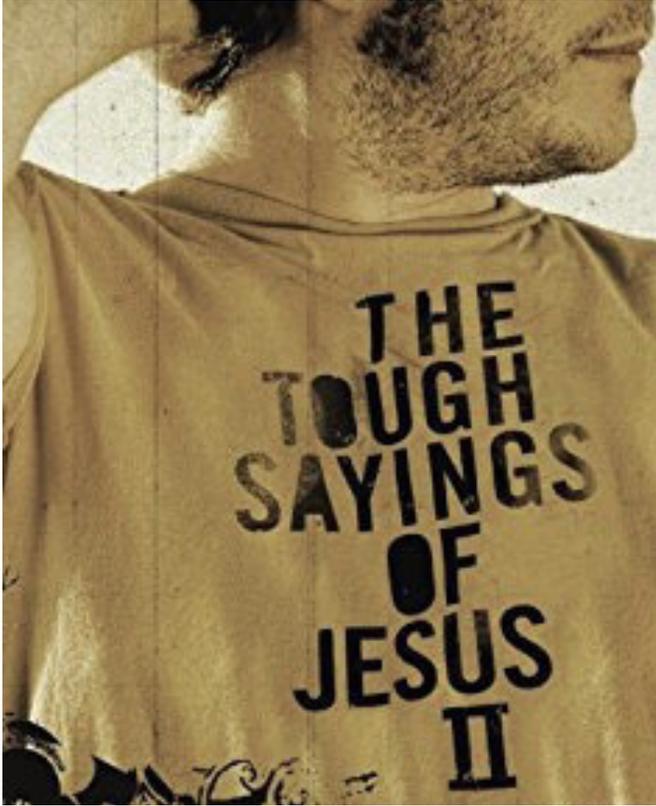
I am speaking now of the bedrock truths belonging to membership in the body of Christ, namely, the death, entombment and resurrection of Christ for our sins (1 Corinthians 15:1-4). Later in this article, I will speak upon other truths belonging to maturity which ought *not* to hinder fellowship, but must still be defended and the various departures from them exposed.

WHAT WOULD JESUS SAY?

Should any still doubt that truth—nowadays—divides rather than unites, let us heed the words of Jesus Christ Himself, Who is supposed by many to be the King of LAJGAASBSDBWAKTCIAUANT, but Who in fact is the opposite of it. Along that line, kindly appreciate the following—

You should not be inferring that I came to be casting peace on the earth. I did not come to be casting peace, but a sword. For I came to pit a man against his father, and a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law. And the enemies of a man are those of his household (Matthew 10:34-36).

Why would the King of Peace say such a thing? Because the peace that this King brings is that peace proceeding from an acceptance of His specific message. John 14:15—“If you should be loving Me, you will be keeping My precepts.” The peace alluded to by Christ comes not by a majority of people believing the *same*



message, but by a minority of people believe the *only* message. John 10:1-8—

“Verily, verily, I am saying to you, he who is not entering through the door into the fold of the sheep, but is climbing up elsewhere, that one is a thief and a robber. Now he who is entering through the door is the shepherd of the sheep. To him the doorkeeper is opening, and the sheep are hearing his voice, and he is summoning his own sheep by name and is leading them out. And whenever he should be ejecting all his own, he is going in front of them, and the sheep are following him, for they are acquainted with his voice. Now an outsider will they under no circumstances be following, but they will be fleeing from him, for they are not acquainted with the voice of the outsiders.” Jesus told them this proverb, yet they know not what things they were that He spoke to them. Jesus, then, said to them again, “Verily, verily, I am saying to you that I am the Door of the sheep. All whoever came before Me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep do not hear them.

You may say, “Oh, but that’s just Jesus. He’s hardcore. He’s all about the Old Testament; it’s a Circumcision thing with Him. Jesus was ‘all or nothing.’ We’re past that in the body of Christ” Really? Listen to Paul in Galatians 1:6-9—

I am marveling that thus, swiftly, you are transferred from that which calls you in the grace of Christ, to a different evangel, which is not another, except it be that some who are disturbing you want also to distort the evangel of Christ. But if ever we also, or a messenger out of heaven, should be bringing an evangel to you beside that which we bring to you, let him be anathema! As we have declared before and at present I am saying again, if anyone is bringing you an evangel beside that which you accepted, let him be anathema!

WHAT UNITY?

Perhaps at this juncture we should understand just what kind of unity we’re talking about. The unity that we desire is not the unity of more people, but the unity centered around specific truth. In order for a unity centered around truth to exist, there must first *be* truth. For there to be truth, it must be carefully distinguished from its opposite—lies. Remember, we are in the era of contrast, an era during which truth and lies (and light and darkness, and belief and unbelief, and righteousness and lawlessness) are forced by God to occupy the same planet. But isn’t the segregation of truth from lies—which must itself be violent due to the polar opposition of truth and lies—isn’t this the very thing threatening to divide people in the first place? Yes, it is. Shall we discard truth, then? I doubt that either Jesus or Paul would recommend that. Thus, truth becomes the litmus test *for* unity; either unite around the truth or gather your forces beneath the banner of error. Truth is not, itself, unity. It is the lighthouse *of* unity—or not. Truth is a fulcrum. Truth is the Continental Divide at which point water must flow toward one ocean or the other.

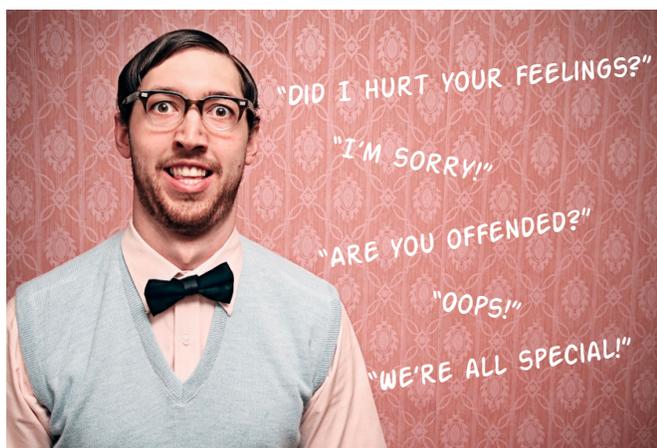
Nothing sits tranquil at the divide.

SPIRITUAL ELITISM?

The dangerous trend arises when sincere yet bleeding hearts in the ecclesia fall prey to the popular notion that unity is based on some abstract, soulish concept of the *person* of Christ, rather than upon the *teaching* of Christ. There is invented an unnatural disconnection of the loving and compassionate Man, Jesus, from the teaching of that Man—as though Jesus, the Man, could be divorced from His message and mission. Why this compulsion to cut Christ asunder? In an era of political correctness—where it is wrong to offend anyone—overly-sensitive people will do anything to spare the feelings of others.

Living in an age of political liberalism—where tolerance is a virtue and divisiveness the devil’s den—the emotional person thinks that, because he or she is so lonely in the gospel, then perhaps there has been too radical of a clinging *to* that gospel, for why are so many others kept out of it? Perhaps it’s that the gospel itself is too radical. If so, then perhaps the gospel ought to be reconsidered through that lens and blunted to make it more palatable. In this way, more people may be allowed to enter. In this way, the holder of the gospel will not be thought of as being either exclusive or intolerant.

Such concern over the opinions of others especially arises in an era where disassociation from anyone based on ethnicity becomes not merely racism, but something akin to murder. Substitute “spirituality” for “ethnicity,” and you have put your finger on the current malady within the body of Christ, whose impulse is to lower the bar of truth so as to include as many souls as possible. At the epicenter of this phenomenon is a nearly desperate need to be accepted. How does one attain it? By accepting everyone—doctrinal disparities be damned—into the body of Christ. Who in our modern society—or in any society—wants to be thought of as a racist? Who in the body of Christ wants to be thought of as a spiritual elitist? Never mind the fact that



it is not we who have drawn the lines of truth, but God. Never mind that it is not we who have locked up the majority of humanity in unbelief and kept them there, but God.

Those who do hold to the truths belonging to Christ’s body are a breed apart—whether they like it or not.

The remedy to the “racist” accusation is thought to be: “Never speak ill of a person of another race, no matter the caliber of that person’s character.” The remedy to the “spiritual elitist” accusation is thought to be: “Never refuse spiritual fellowship with those holding to different teachings,

no matter how heinous these teachings might be.” The result of the “Hey-I’m-not-a-racist” action is that bad behavior is tolerated and lawlessness spreads. The result of the “Hey-I’m-not-a-spiritual-elitist” action is that bad teaching is tolerated and spiritual lawlessness spreads. These days, in the ecclesia, it takes a strong person to withstand the popular tide and quell the infection of lawlessness. Such people are rare. They must swim against the stream of political correctness and risk offending everyone—not only those who would *do* lawlessness, but those who would excuse it in the interest of unity.

I hate to say this, but I will. The motivation behind this abhorrence of offending people is the need to be liked. It is the need to be thought well of by the majority of Earth’s population. This is a common human desire, but also a portal to its own brand of trouble. As Herbert Bayard Swope has said, “I can’t give you a sure-fire formula for success, but I can give you a formula for failure: try to please everybody all the time.” No one wants to be perceived as either a racist, an elitist, a supremacist, or an egotist—especially not in the spiritual arena. These things are bad enough on their own, in the secular world, but when tied to spirituality, one can easily earn the label “hypocrite” in addition to these other invectives. After all (and so it is said) who are *we* to insist that *we* see the truth while billions languish in darkness? Who are *we* to insist that *our* God is any different or better than anyone else’s deity? Who are *we* to insist that *our* message of pure unadulterated grace cannot and should not tolerate even a dash of law?

Is our message as exclusive and divisive as we are? This thought plagues emotional minds.

RIDING THE RAIL

It seems so unloving to hold a message so specific and so black-and-white that it drives people—all people—off the proverbial fence. Have you ever heard the saying, “Truth is truth”? This saying is true. In the fence analogy, truth is the very narrow rail on top of the fence. Unless one is an Olympic balance beam competitor, anyone hearing truth—stark truth, hard truth as it is meant to be preached—will fall one way or the other off the fence rail. So when the majority of people fall onto the side of the lie, there tends to be such sorrow felt by those on the truth side that they slip into “survivor’s guilt” mode, and seek to rescue the “poor people” opposite them who are not really poor at all, they just hate truth. Survivor’s guilt goes something like: *Maybe it is my fault that the fence rail*

is so thin. Maybe it is my fault that the poor people fell to the other side. Maybe I am the one responsible for rescuing them from the lies. Maybe I should save them, irrespective of personal cost. The next thought is unconscious, but is the most deceptive and damaging thought of all: *Maybe I should not even concern myself with compromising the truth, but should expand the gates of the gospel for the sake of these poor, lost souls. What would Jesus do?*

Jesus would tell the people who hate the truth, “See you at the Consummation,” and fellowship with the believers until the rest of those sheep are scheduled to enter— “For there is one God, and one Mediator of God and mankind, a Man, Christ Jesus, Who is giving Himself a correspondent Ransom for all, *the testimony in its own eras* (1 Timothy 2:6).

This emotional need for visible, tangible unity is the basis for a false peace. Jesus did not come to bring this false peace; such a false peace is condemned by both



Jesus and Paul. Therefore, anyone thinking that God bases His peace on the size of one’s circle, is mistaken. Anyone thinking that peace comes from keeping as many people as possible on the good side of the fence, is mistaken. Not only are such individuals mistaken, but in the interest of pursuing so bogus a peace as this, the do-gooders necessarily lower the bar of truth (in the analogy, they widen the top rail of the fence), so that it may include as many truth-haters as possible.

WITHIN THE BODY OF CHRIST

All of the above has to do with the truth belonging to membership in the body of Christ, that is, truth belonging to entering that body from without. *Within* the body of Christ, members must still seek truth and endeavor

to correct departures from it, for truth—always—belongs to our maturity. Truth belongs to our love. Accepting the premise that such departures are not so vital as to invalidate Paul’s gospel (departures such as Eternal Torment, Annihilation, Free Will/Open Theism and the Trinity invalidate Paul’s gospel), none of the lesser departures ought to affect fellowship. Some beliefs which I deem to be deplorable yet lesser departures from truth, in the order of their awfulness, are 1) the non pre-existence of Christ, 2) bestowing eonian salvation upon atheists and other non-believers by virtue of marrying a believer, 3) splitting Paul’s letters into two bodies of Christ, 4) relegating Paul’s early letters to Israel, 5) (related to 3 & 4) denying the snatching away of the body of Christ, 6) relegating the events of the book of Revelation to the past, 7) insisting that God is finished with Israel, 8) assigning the book of Hebrews to the Uncircumcision, and 9) making the flood of Noah local. As terrible as these teachings are and as deserving of correction as they are, none of them disqualify from the faith and should not be a matter of avoiding spiritual fellowship.

FELLOWSHIP

What does Paul mean by “fellowship,” when he says, “What communion has light with darkness?” (2 Corinthians 6:14). First of all, “communion” here is the same Greek word translated “fellowship” elsewhere in the *Concordant Literal New Testament* (“communion” having to do with things, “fellowship” with people), so I’m treating these words as the same, which they are. The Greek word for each is *koinonia*. The English elements are, “COMMON-BEING.” Colloquially, this would be “of the same essence.” The word “being” is strong. Two people having something in “common-being” will be joined of heart, mind and soul. *Koinonia* is not a superficial “gathering unto” such as one might find at a Christmas party or family picnic. It is a meeting of much deeper commonality such as occurs between members of the body of Christ.

UNDERSTANDING THE WILL OF THE LORD

There are some in the body of Christ who would make behavior, rather than teaching, the true basis of fellowship. Behavior is important, yes, but right behavior is produced only by right teaching. Light comes before fruit. As Paul writes in Ephesians 5:9-10—

As children of light be walking—for the fruit of the light is in all goodness and righteousness and truth—testing what is well pleasing to the Lord.



Are, say, die-hard Catholics who venerate statues and never consider their sins to be forgiven, yet who behave themselves—are they in the body of Christ?

Light not only produces the fruit of good behavior, it also produces more light. Paul then writes in Ephesians 5:17—

Therefore do not become imprudent, but understand what the will of the Lord is.

Yes! Understand what the will of the Lord is. Thank you, Paul. This is what the body of Christ is about, or should be about. This ought to be our occupation. This is the stuff around which we fellowship: the will of the Lord. Otherwise, we're merely a Christmas party or a family picnic. When we grasp the will of the Lord, everything else falls into place, including behavior worthy of a member of Christ's body. This is our clarion call. Without it, we've no common depth.

The verse that is habitually misused to relegate an understanding of the Lord's will to the back seat in favor of behavior, is 2 Timothy 2:22—

Now youthful desires flee: yet pursue righteousness, faith, love, peace, with all who are invoking the Lord out of a clean heart.

The conclusion based on this verse—which is never considered in its context; I will do that next—is that we ought to fellowship (intimate, spiritual union) with those possessing “a clean heart,” irrespective of their doctrines, irrespective of what they think the Lord's will is, or if they

even care what it is. A clean heart is an agreeable, guileless heart, un-infected by subversity or malice. All well and good. Sure, I'd love to hang out with people such as this. But depending on an individual's grasp of the Lord's will, I cannot necessarily enjoy spiritual fellowship with him or her, nor should I.

THE CONTEXT

Let's do something that is rarely done; in fact, in thirty years, I've never even seen it even attempted. Let's look at the greater context of 2 Timothy 2:22. In doing so, we will see that the last thing Paul is saying here is that we ought to indulge intimate, spiritual fellowship with spiritually empty vessels as long as such vessels deal honorably with the IRS and visit their sick mothers. According to the popular theory, we ought to treat such individuals as nothing less than members of Christ's body—fellow-believers—never mind their adherence to such errors as Eternal Torment, Free Will and the Trinity, and never mind their disinterest of God's true will.

Here are the seven verses immediately preceding 2 Timothy 2:22. I give you 2 Timothy 2:15-21—

Endeavor to present yourself to God qualified, an unashamed worker, correctly cutting the word of truth. Yet from profane prattlings stand aloof, for they will be progressing to more irreverence, 17 and their word will spread as gangrene, of whom are Hymeneus and Philetus, 18 who swerve as to truth, saying that the resurrection has already occurred, and are subverting the

faith of some. 19 Howbeit, the solid foundation of God stands, having this seal: The Lord knew those who are His, and, Let everyone who is naming the name of the Lord withdraw from injustice. 20 Now in a great house there are not only gold and silver utensils, but wooden and earthenware also, and some indeed for honor, yet some for dishonor. 21 If, then, anyone should ever be purging himself from these, he will be a utensil for honor, hallowed, and useful to the Owner, made ready for every good act.

Much of this chapter involves a proper grasp of Scripture. Paul's chief concern in this passage is "correctly cutting the word of truth." The result of a failure to do this is the introduction of "profane prattlings" into the ecclesia, resulting in "irreverence." "Profane prattling" is empty chatter; words without substance; human ideas divorced from Scripture. "Irreverence" is the lack of revering God. It is the treating of His Words lightly. We are to have no fellowship with such things or with those embracing such things, thus Paul's entreaty to "stand aloof" and "purge" oneself from it. Aloofness is not something generally encouraged, yet here comes Paul saying, "be this way." Aloofness is "standing at a distance, especially in feeling or interest; apart." Then there is "purging," which is ridding one's life of an undesirable thing. As becomes quickly evident, both of these negatives relate to false teaching.

HYMENEUS AND PHILETUS

I would hate for my name to have become immortal due to my infecting the original ecclesias with false teaching. But such is the fate of Hymeneus and Philetus. Make no mistake: Paul hated false teaching, yes, even those teachings that we would call "lesser departures." Paul never countenanced them, no, not for a moment. He attacked them like the loving little bulldog that he was. Why? Was it because Paul was proud? Was it because he was arrogant? Was it because of his gargantuan ego? Was it that his great learning drove him so mad that he thought of nothing else but lording such scholarship over the ecclesias? No. But you're close with your thought that it had something to do with the ecclesias. Paul simply hated the idea that any member of any ecclesia could get the wrong idea about God and thus have his or her expectations pummeled and their peace derailed.

Verse 18 is a beautiful thing. In my opinion, verse 18 captures the essence of the whole letter of 2 Timothy—two phrases in particular: "swerving as to the truth" and "subverting the faith of some." Paul went mad at this.

The only way that someone can swerve "as to the truth" is if the truth is in view. The prospect of the resurrection of the dead sat constantly before the saints in Paul's letters, yet here were these two prattling Greeks twisting the glorious truth until it became a lie. It doesn't take much for this to happen. One twist will do it. Again, the worst kind of lie is



Hymeneus.

Philetus.

that which departs *from* the truth. What was the departure from truth that so raised Paul's hackles?

"Saying that the resurrection has already occurred."

What in the world did Hymeneus and Philetus mean by this? How could the resurrection have already occurred if the saints, including Paul, still walked upon the Earth as mortals? I believe that these men "spiritualized" the resurrection, much as Preterists do today. The resurrection was not literal and physical, so they said, but rather allegorical; mystical. "We're already there!" squawked the Scripture-twisters who opposed Paul. No wonder the faith of some was subverted. "Is this as good as it gets?" some would have asked. Paul would have said, "Where did you hear *that*?" and the report would have come, "From Hymeneus and Philetus, telling us that the resurrection has already occurred," to which Paul would have replied, "*Really* now!"

GANGRENE

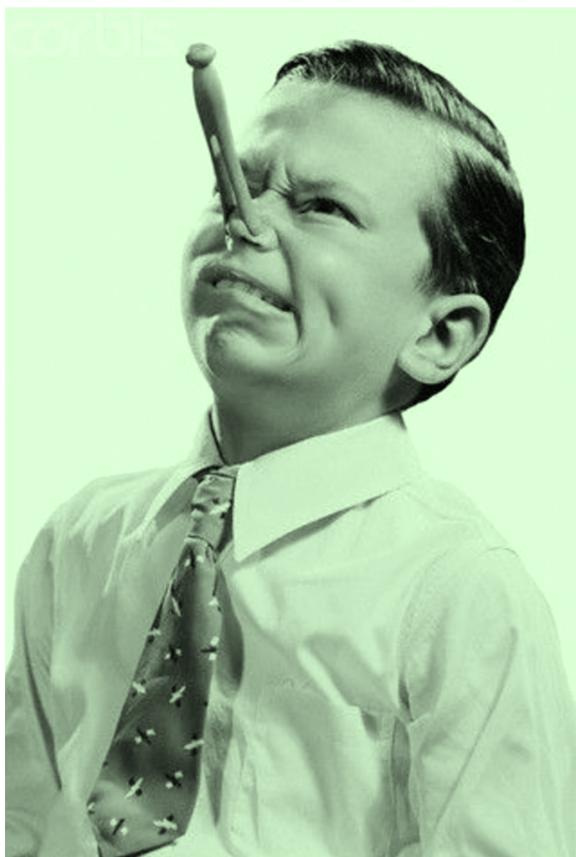
What is the danger of so seemingly small a lie such as, "the resurrection of the dead is allegorical rather than literal"? The danger is in the misconception that it's a small lie. Like gangrene, such a departure seems small, but then it sucks the life-hope from its victims and spreads like a deadly disease. According to Wikipedia, gangrene is—

...a type of necrosis caused by a critically insufficient blood supply. This potentially life-threatening condition may occur after an injury or infection, or in people suffer-

ing from any chronic health problem affecting blood circulation. The primary cause of gangrene is reduced blood supply to the affected tissues, which results in cell death. Diabetes and long-term smoking increase the risk of suffering from gangrene.

The miscreants Hymeneus and Philetus caught the believers in a susceptible state, choosing *this* time to infect them with their “new teaching.” This “threatened the life” of the saints in that they would now imagine themselves without a future and a hope. The end of the line for them? Death. Before that? Suffering.

Paul stomped the life from the embers of this smoldering lie before it could become a wildfire of misinformation. His remedy? “Stand aloof!” *Ouch, Paul—not very politically correct there. Not very sociable, Paul. Not very compassionate. Not very accepting of the two nice men. You’re acting very divisively, Paul. Aren’t we supposed to love one another in the body of Christ? Isn’t it rude to mention names? Shouldn’t we all just try to get along? Are not Hymeneus and Philetus members of the same body of Christ that you are, Paul?* Yes, in fact they are. Nevertheless, their “new revelation” stunk to high heaven. “Clear the room,” Paul says. “Leave it alone.” “Leave *what* alone?” comes the question. “The teaching of Hymeneus and Philetus,”



answers Paul. “Divert your ears and attention from it, lest you die of the noxious fumes, that is, lose your peace.”

In our ecclesia, likewise, there are departures from truth that have spread like gangrene, or threaten to. One teaching has removed from us the expectation of the snatching away of the body of Christ, turning Paul’s first letter to the Thessalonians—in which the snatching away is described—into a missive written chiefly to Israelites, confirming their patriarchal promises. Another teaching insists that the events of the book of Revelation are historical—allegorically fulfilled in 70 A.D., never to be literally fulfilled in the future. These are just two “new teachings” that can and do spread like a terrible disease, subverting the faith of some, if not many. My remedy is Paul’s remedy: Such teachings ought to be stood aloof from. Purge yourself from them! *Strange.* This Pauline exposure and rebuke appears in the same context—in fact, immediately preceding—the apostle telling Timothy, “Pursue righteousness, faith, love, peace, with all who are invoking the Lord out of a clean heart.”

PURSUIING IS NOT HAVING

This verse about pursuing righteousness, faith, love and peace has been misinterpreted and twisted to trick us into believing that fellowship belongs to all, irrespective of beliefs. I have actually heard some say that they would accept into the faith those who believe that Jesus Christ never raised from the dead at all. Incredible! Yet this is the state of things. We’re infected by sappy, soft “love.”

I’ve looked anew at this word “pursue,” and I realize now that it’s the key to understanding the passage. Pursuing something assumes that the thing has yet to be grasped. Else why is one pursuing? I’ve found a perfect example of this in Philippians 3:10-14—

...to know Him, and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, conforming to His death,¹¹ if somehow I should be attaining to the resurrection that is out from among the dead. *Not that I already obtained, or am already perfected. Yet I am pursuing,* if I may be grasping also that for which I was grasped also by Christ Jesus.¹³ Brethren, *not as yet am I reckoning myself to have grasped, yet one thing—forgetting, indeed, those things which are behind, yet stretching out to those in front—¹⁴ toward the goal am I pursuing* for the prize of God’s calling above in Christ Jesus.

We are to pursue righteousness, faith, love and peace with people decent enough to be calling upon Jesus’



name. Who calls upon Jesus' name except those seeking knowledge? Happening upon such a seeker, it occurs to us that perhaps God has opened such a soul to hearing of God's deeper ways. With these, then, we can *pursue* righteousness, faith, love and peace, hoping to attain it. That is, we can seek to inform such sincere individuals of the righteousness, faith, love and peace of God, seeing whether or not God will grant them a changing of the mind to come into truth. This hope is not something that we have "reckoned ourselves to have grasped," but rather something toward which we move. In other words, it is something that we pursue.

To invoke—as in "pursue righteousness, faith, love, peace, with all who are invoking the Lord out of a clean heart"—is to appeal. Paul writes in Romans 10:13, "For everyone, whoever should be invoking the name of the Lord, shall be saved." How does the salvation come? On the heels of an invocation, through a herald (Romans 10:14). My point is that, in this context, invocation precedes salvation. Returning to 2 Timothy 2:22, the passage seems plain to me now. We are to pursue the presentation of the truths of righteousness, faith, love and peace to those of a clean heart (honest seekers) who are at least invoking Jesus' name. We do this in the real expectation that such honest invokers are the most likely to receive the aforementioned truths.

What a far different understanding this is from

imagining that Paul is forcing an unlawful communion of unlike minds, based merely upon a sweet disposition. For, "what communion has light with darkness?" (2 Corinthians 6:14).

PROFANE PRATTLINGS REVISITED

The only other time Paul mentions the phrase "profane prattlings" is in 1 Timothy 6:20-21. In this context, as in the 2 Timothy passage, he also warns against swerving from faith—

O Timothy, that which is committed to you, guard, turning aside from the profane prattlings and antipathies of falsely named "knowledge," which some are professing. As to the faith, they swerve. Grace be with you! Amen!

Like Timothy, we have been entrusted by Paul and, by extension, by God Himself, with massive amounts of truth. What are we to do with it? Guard it! Yes, even within the body of Christ, truth must be kept safe. Paul told Timothy in 2 Timothy 1:14, "The ideal thing committed to you, guard..." God has set watchmen on the wall of truth, equipping them with logical minds and soundly translated Scriptures, that they might help themselves and others resist falsely named "knowledge"—which some are professing.

As to the faith, some swerve.

PAUL, CHRIST, AND TEACHING

Those who would be Christ-centric must be teaching-centric as well, for teaching comes from Christ. The two are not sold separately. Note Paul’s obsession with teaching—

Now thanks be to God that you were slaves of Sin, yet you obey from the heart the type of teaching to which you were given over (Romans 6:17).

Now I am entreating you, brethren, to be noting those who are making dissensions and snares beside the teaching which you learned, and avoid them, for such for our Lord Christ are not slaving, but for their own bowels, and through compliments and adulation are deluding the hearts of the innocent (Romans 16:17-18).

[A supervisor] ought to be upholding the faithful word according to the teaching, that he may be able to entreat with sound teaching as well as to expose those who contradict (Titus 1:9).

“Expose, rebuke and entreat with all patience and teaching (2 Timothy 4:2).

UNITY

Paul uses the word “unity” only twice in all his letters, both times in Ephesians, chapter 4. In 4:3, Paul mentions the unity that exists by default due to our mutual membership in Christ’s body,



“Paul equates unity with teaching.”

saying simply, “Keep the unity of the spirit.” But when it comes to our everyday walk in Christ, where the rubber meets the road, Paul equates unity with teaching. Appreciate him in Ephesians 4:11-14—

And the same One gives these, indeed, as apostles, yet these as prophets, yet these as evangelists, yet these as pastors and teachers, 12 toward the adjusting of the saints for the work of dispensing, for the upbuilding of the body of Christ, 13 unto the end that we should all attain to *the unity of the faith and of the realization of the son of God*, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature of the complement of the Christ, 14 that we may by no means still be

minors, surging hither and thither and being *carried about by every wind of teaching*, by human caprice, by craftiness with a view to the systematizing of the deception.

To Paul, the opposite of coming into a unity of the faith is being carried about by every wind of teaching. Thus, *sound* teaching—being rooted and grounded in the truth—belongs to a unity of the faith. To Paul, unity gathers around teaching, *his* teaching, which he received from Christ—

We are thanking the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, always praying concerning you, on hearing of *your faith in Christ Jesus* and the love which you have for all the saints, because of the expectation reserved for you in the heavens, which *you hear before in the word of truth of the evangel*, which, being present with you, according as in the entire world also, is bearing fruit and growing, according as it is among you also, from the day on which *you hear and realized the grace of God in truth, according as you learned it from Epaphras*, our beloved fellow slave, who is a faithful dispenser of Christ for us, who makes evident also to us your love in spirit (Colossians 1:3-8).

TRUE LOVE

To insist that, for membership into Christ’s body, doctrine and teaching ought to assume backseat status to emotional concessions and a propped-up, soulish unity, is a terrible mistake. To insist that, *within* the body of Christ, the correction of falsely named “knowledge” ought to be renounced in the interest of a hippie-style concord, is also a terrible mistake. Where there is truth, let us celebrate. Where there is error, let us recalibrate. May this be accomplished, within the ecclesia, with precision, skill, patience and love. For if we have not love, we have nothing. Let it not be the Hallmark-variety of love that we seek, with its pasted-on hearts and sappy verse. Let it not be the world’s brand of love that we endorse, which would excuse and even celebrate criminal diversity. Rather, let our love be that of God, the tough variety of love that would responsibly and yet reliably wound for the purpose of rebuilding and then binding up.

“Yet now are remaining faith, expectation, love—these three. Yet the greatest of these is love. Be pursuing love.” —MZ